

THE MIMETIDAE OF ST. HELENA ISLAND (ARACHNIDA: ARANEAE)¹

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ABSTRACT: The spider family Mimetidae is reported for the first time from St. Helena Island in the southern Atlantic Ocean. The family is represented on the island by a single species, *Ero aphana* (Walckenaer) which has an old world distribution.

DESCRIPTORS: spiders, Araneae, Mimetidae, *Ero aphana*, distribution, St. Helena Island.

St. Helena Island is located in the southern Atlantic Ocean approximately 1,932 km. west of Angola on the western coast of Africa at approximately 15°56'S 5°42'W. It is a mountainous island of volcanic origin which is 16.9 km long and 10.4 km wide. The highest point on the island is Mt. Achtaeon at 8.81 km.

The spider family Mimetidae is represented on the island of St. Helena by a single species, *Ero aphana* (Walckenaer). Observations by Hentz (1875), Gerhardt (1926), Bristowe (1941), Archer (1941), Czajka (1963), Kaston (1965), Cutler (1972) and Lowrie, Icenogle and Thompson (1972) indicate that mimetids feed on other spiders (eg. Agelenidae Araneidae, Dictynidae, Linyphiidae, Philodromidae, Tetragnathidae, Theraphosidae, Theridiidae and other Mimetidae). Cutler (1972) and Lawler (1972) have observed *Mimetus eutypus* Chamberlin & Ivie and *Mimetus puritanus* Chamberlin also feeding on insects. Mimetids are typically found in ground debris, vegetation and the webs of other spiders. The members of this family are distinguished from other spiders by the presence of a promarginal row of long, slightly curved spines on the tibiae and metatarsi of legs I and II. Shorter curved spines between the long spines are graduated, short at the proximal end to long at the distal end. The genus *Ero* is characterized by having the height of the clypeus hardly, if at all, narrower than the length of the MOA, and leg I not more than one and one-third times as long as leg IV.

Heretofore the family Mimetidae has not been recorded from St. Helena. The genus *Ero* is world wide in distribution but *E. aphana* (Walckenaer) has an Old World distribution (North Africa, Europe and Russia) and thus the Mimetid fauna of St. Helena

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appears to be Old World in origin.

Ero aphana (Walckenaer), 1802

Aranea aphana Walckenaer, 1802, p. 206 (n. sp.).

Ero aphana: Simon, E., 1881, p. 33; 1882, p. 361; 1884, p. 330; 1898, p. 2; 1932, p. 774, 778.

Records: S.W. Thompson's Wood, elev. 1700-1800 ft., November 23, 1965, collectors: P. Bailewsky, P. Benoit and N. Leleup, 1♂ and 1 juvenile (Coll. No. 129.109); High central ridge, Mt. Actaeon, elev. 8.53-8.86 km., December 11, 1965, collectors: P. Bailewsky, P. Benoit and N. Leleup, 1♂ (Coll. No. 129.326); High central ridge, Cabbage Tree road, elev. 8.21 km., March, 1967, collectors: J. Decelle, N. and J. Leleup, 2♂, 2♀ and 2 juveniles (Colls. No. 133.283, 133.286 and 133.305); High central ridge, elev. 8.53 km., Cabbage Tree, February 6, 1967, collectors: J. Decelle, N. and J. Leleup, rotten log, 1♂ and 2♀ (Colls. No. 133.379 and 133.384); High central ridge, elev. 7.55-8.53 km., January 22-31, 1967, collectors: J. Decelle, N. and J. Leleup, 1♀ and 1 juvenile (Coll. No. 133.370); High peak, elev. 7.87-8.53 km. March, 1967, collectors: J. Decelle, N. and J. Leleup, 1♂ (Coll. No. 133.333); Valley near St. Diana's Peak, February 9, 15, 1967, collectors: J. Decelle, N. and J. Leleup, 1 juvenile (Coll. No. 133.448).

The specimens listed above are deposited in the Musee Royal de l' Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgium. The author would like to thank Dr. P.L.G. Benoit for making the specimens available for study.

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